

How the Seniors Treat Their Senioritas.

BY CAROL BIRD.

INTO one of the gay cafes of Mexico City there comes a swarming native Don Juan. His friends hasten to explain, aside, that he is enamored of a charming little seniorita who is called Trinidad. After this hasty conference Don Juan is presented to the visitor from the states. "And where is the beautiful Trinidad?" the visitor asks, joining in the banter directed at Don Juan.

He stares blankly at his questioner. "Trinidad? At home, of course." That is the memory of the Mexico of today that comes to the native traveler who has just returned—at least, when the traveler is a woman. "At home, of course?" I had wondered where the women—youth and middle and upper class—of Mexico could be. I saw so few of them. Don Juan explained. That is where they all are—the pretty Concepcions, the dark-eyed Morenos, the olive-tinted Consuellos. At home, where the seniors of the house, el padre, el hermano—husband, father or brother—choose to keep them.

Some philosopher has said that "whatever the condition of a nation, its women are the reason." There is ample opportunity for both the cynic and the optimist to agree with this sage, but whichever way the epigram is interpreted, it remains that a nation's women are among its most interesting possessions. And perhaps the Mexican woman has her "atmosphere" and her "quality"—is an index to both sides of any argument about the republic of President Obregon.

Bright lights, gay amusements, the play places are not for Mexico's femininity. The women are secluded in a manner almost monastic. Not merely in the name of romance do the writers of fiction tell of the latticed balcony, the prison-like setting of a lustrous-eyed Dolores, who coquettishly tosses a rose to her forlorn suitor on the ground below. Sharp-eyed duennas are not para-

into the modern cities merely for effect. It is all true in Mexico. Mexican women of all classes, except the Indians, are hedged in more closely than in Spain or any other European country. Almost the harem system prevails. I had heard before I traveled in the southern states that the better class women were compelled to observe all of the traditions of Spain. The customs were the same, and Mexican women had no "rights," few privileges and were subject to the whims of their menfolk. I thought, however, all this had passed; that with new regimes and natural progression changes had come. But I discovered the old customs still obtain, almost universally. There is a new "legal" or hypothetical freedom. The women have the right to vote, though few exercise it. Those are the only changes—the only steps toward woman's newer freedom. The political status of women in Mexico did not particularly interest me. It was their social condition which caught my attention.

I HAD been in Mexico City several days when suddenly I realized I had seen many Mexican women. Indian women, yes; in their "rebosas" hair in braids, pattering along with bare feet. But women of the middle and upper classes, no. Along the splendid broad avenues of Mexico's beautiful capital city I had seen plenty of Mexican men, business men and also those in brilliant-tinted scarves and wide sombreros. But no women. In the alamedas (street parks) crowds of little ninos, with here and there a nana (nurse) guarding them, but no others of my sex.

Even in the department stores, places where one would think the women of any country would congregate, there were few of them. Women of the lower classes, in black shawls and long trailing black skirts, were there, but their higher caste sisters were absent. At first I thought these Indian women, wives of the poor, were the only types of which Mexico could boast. Later I learned that when the better class women shop they drive to the stores in closed carriages or automobiles and remain at the curb. The shopkeepers carry merchandise out to them. Sometimes these are the only types of which they are interested delivered to their homes for inspection.

While speaking to an intelligent Mexican from Sonora, the state from which comes De la Huerta, secretary of the treasury, I said: "I haven't spoken to a woman since I arrived in the capital. I haven't met any. Where are they? Have they been banished? Or do you keep them in hiding?"

"They are at home, of course," came the inevitable response. "It is not the custom for our women to go about alone. My wife, for example, is at home with our four ninos. She has plenty to do."

"But the young girls—where are they? They haven't any ninos to care for. Why haven't I seen them about the streets and parks, stores and restaurants?"

My friend repeated, mechanically: "It is not the custom. Our senioritas never go out unless chaperoned. If the chaperons are busy—well—the girls amuse themselves at home."

Eventually I was to discover this home amusement consisted of having tea with her little sister. The girls are exceedingly religious—sewing a bit, painting occasionally, playing the piano a little and giving much time to sentimental dreams.

THE day following my conversation this same man brought his wife to call upon me at my hotel. She had her four little sons with her. She was timid, and glanced about her interested, curious, slightly nervous. As she sat on a spacious couch in the hotel reception room it was apparent the experience was a novel one to her.

"Do you like the Hotel Regis?" I asked rather feebly, because I did not know what to talk about with this woman whose viewpoint was so different from mine. She answered demurely, in her broken English: "It is very nice—yes. I like. No visit American-kind hotel before."

"You never have been here before?" "Oh, no not I—well—we women do not go out very much."

As for her husband, his manner was magnanimous, as though he would say: "Am I not the kind and indulgent husband to let you take the air in public? If you are very good, perhaps you shall be taken out again some time."

"At Home, of Course." Is All They Tell You If You Ask About the Pretty Trinidades and Juanitas in the Land Where Man Commands and Woman Obeys—Courtships Are Still Carried on With Balcony and Guitar, But Romance Doesn't Give the Bride an Open Sesame to Freedom.

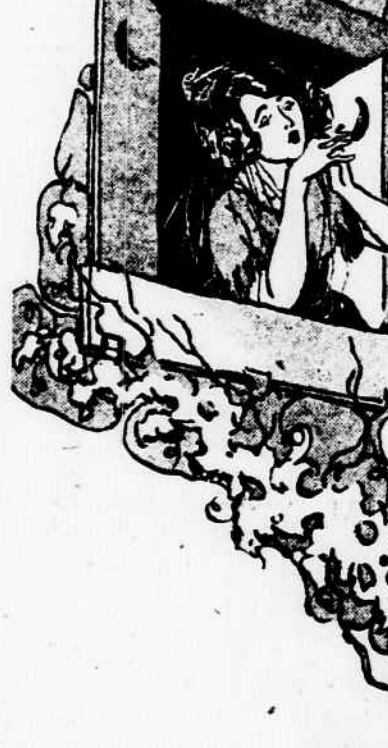
It was impossible to study them at close range. I had decided to become acquainted with their men. This seems a bit unconventional, but I did not mean it to be so. That I succeeded with very small effort causes me to reflect that if the women of Mexico remain placid captives, "imprisoned," knowing so little social freedom, the vivacious American girls who are invading their country in larger numbers each year will steal marches on them. They must come out of their seclusion and keep an eye on their men. Their roving captors seem strongly attracted by the fair-haired, fair-skinned foreigners who are taking jobs in Mexican stores, banks and other business institutions.

To return to my reminiscence. I call this incident the "episode of the rickety barouch." I was riding in one of these quaint vehicles, which are popular in Mexico, with a port inspector. When, after I was seated, he politely asked me to change seats with him my curiosity was piqued. The same thing had happened to me on several occasions when riding with native men.

"Do you mind telling me why you ask me to change my seat?" I asked. He explained. When, after I was seated, he politely asked me to change seats with him my curiosity was piqued. The same thing had happened to me on several occasions when riding with native men.

That was all! Just an hour before the same man had shown me a photograph of a Madonna-like little Mexican girl from the city of Guanajuato—his Elena—his betrothed. Why in the world, I pondered, should a little jewel like Elena consent to sit for the rest of her days at his left side? Why do all the Elenas of Mexico consent to be "put in their places?"

ANOTHER reminiscence. I call this the "cognac and tea affair." A



A MEXICAN YOUTH IS SATISFIED TO COURT AT LONG DISTANCE—SERENADING HIS BELOVED NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, THRILLED WHEN SHE TOSSES A FLOWER.

diplomat is the hero. I was dining with him at Bach's, a popular Spanish restaurant in the capital. I had a severe cold. I wasn't particularly brilliant conversationalist that night. I coughed a great deal. I was not as keenly appreciative of his epigrammatic remarks as ordinarily I would have been. Perhaps, after all, he was justified in his arbitrariness.

Suddenly he said—announced: "You shall have hot tea and cognac for that cold." Then he motioned for the waiter.

"I do not like hot tea and cognac," said I. "Nevertheless, you shall have it," he said, and gave the order. When the hot tea and cognac arrived he poured the last into the first and handed me the cup. I demurred, somewhat indignantly.

"I do not like—"

"Drink," he ordered, his piercing black eyes fixed sternly upon me. I drank.

Who would care to make a scene, anyway, in a crowded restaurant? But if this is the course pursued by a diplomat one may imagine how just an ordinary Mexican husband would bend his wife's will to his.

I had occasion to get back at the diplomat a few days later. He invited me to dine with him at the cafe in the lovely Chapultepec Park, in which is the castle of the president. Mexican men have a startling and naive way of asking a new feminine acquaintance to tell them what she thinks of them. The diplomat was no exception to the rule. In the midst of the luncheon he asked abruptly: "Well, what do you think of me?"

Do you like me? Do I bore you? Are you pleased with my conversation? Tell me exactly the opinion you have formed of me."

I was taken unawares. But his ingenuously demanded he be answered frankly, so I spoke my thoughts. "Your naïveté enchants me. I should like to take you home with me and have my little sister marry you."

Then double-barreled frankness from him. "I do not like your manner. You speak to me as though I were a bibelot on your dressing table. You would point me out to your American amigos and say: 'There! Gaze! It is a curio I brought back with me from Mexico. Interessante, es no verdad?'"

"Bibelot!" I exclaimed. "There, that is a good word. Not for you, but for a Mexican woman. Bibelot! That is what they are, the women of your country. Ornaments! Decorative! You men make them that—with your tyranny."

know how to handle our women. We know how to keep them under control. They are contented. So are we. Let us and them alone."

I HAVE still another reminiscence, which I call "the evening cloak affair." I needed a cloak to wear at a reception at the national palace. I had been invited by President and Mrs. Obregon. A Mexican friend volunteered to be interpreter at the store. At the first shop I was shown cloaks of many colors—typically Spanish creations, of stiff, unyielding taffetas, somber black velvets and satins. The clerk asked me to try one on. I shook my head.

"Try it on," ordered my companion. "How can you say whether or not you like it when you have merely looked at it?"

"It isn't necessary to put it on. I know without trying it on it would not be becoming." We went through the same proceeding at other shops. The senior scowled and voiced his disapproval several times. Girl clerks were a bit frightened at the stand I took. They gazed at me in commiseration, as though to say: "Just wait until you get home!" They did not know I still was "seated at his right."

Finally, at a little shop in the Avenida San Francisco, where only French and American cloaks and gowns were sold, I found a suitable wrap. During the ride home the senior said: "If you had been my wife you would have purchased one of the first cloaks shown you."

"But why?" I exclaimed. "They were not suited to me. Had I bought one of them it would have been a becoming and I would not have been pleased or happy."

He was obdurate. "Nevertheless, had you been my wife you would have bought the cloak I wished you to buy and your own feelings would not have mattered."

He objected, it was plain, not to my choice, but to my refusal to take

When the Mexican youth woe a girl he engages in a puerile sort of pastime called "Hacer el Oso"—playing the bear. He is satisfied to court at long distance—standing outside the window of his loved one, serenading her night after night, singing his love, thrilled when the girl tosses him a flower. When she lets him know in some coquettish way that she looks upon him with favor he approaches her parents, or the priest becomes his emissary. If the parents agree, he may call at his charmer's home, but always members of the family are present. Little Brother Rodolfo is poking around, or small Sister Sofia, and perhaps los parientes. Sometimes he walks with his fiancée in a neighboring park, or takes her to the opera or theater, always remembering to buy extra tickets for members of her family who must chaperon her. It is an expensive business—courtship in Mexico.

Not long ago I talked to Mexican girl singers sent to the United States by their government to study for grand opera. I wondered how they enjoyed their new-found freedom, how they liked running around New York alone, unchaperoned, free to come and go as they pleased. "Now that you have tasted free-



dom, do you believe girls should be as secluded as they are in Mexico?" I asked, anticipating a different answer from the one I received.

"The really good girl in Mexico would not care to go out alone. As for others—well—"

She shrugged her shoulders significantly. Perhaps Mexican women do enjoy their prison-like existence. Perhaps they fondly believe that, because their men-folk guard them so carefully, they are more deeply cherished than women of other countries. It remains that the upper-caste woman, as I have said, is much of a social ornament—expected to look as well as she can, obey her senior. And she appears to be fairly satisfied.

The poorer women are drudges, never knowing the feel of pretty clothes, and are ignorant of the fundamentals of cooking. And that is a great big vital fact. Two requisites there are to Mexican middle and lower class regeneration—at least, two. First, the ability to buy food; second, ability to cook food. These are the rocks on which everything must be built. Tortillas and frioles could never support an Anglo-Saxon civilization.

TODAY feminine "activity" in Mexico is almost solely among women of the middle class. Neither the women of the rich nor the ignorant poor are "active." The middle class has greater freedom than the others. Its women are studying English. Some are taking positions across the border, in Texas and nearby states, as

with low-pillowed lounges and carved stools, every one sat around sipping liquors. Again the segregation. Women chatted in groups and the men stood in prominent places about the room talking. When the door of the brilliantly lighted banquet room were thrown open I learned that a man who escorted a woman to the reception did not necessarily take her in to supper. I was whisked away from my escort by Gen. Plutarco Elias Calles, head of the Obregon cabinet, and taken to my place at table. To my surprise, only women were seated at the long table.

Gen. Calles paused a moment at the back of my chair to talk to me after I was seated and then departed, as did the other men. Later, when the supper was nearly finished, the man returned one by one and stood in corners of the room sipping champagne or leaning over the backs of the chairs of their women. Even the president stood.

Five glasses of wine were served to each woman, and apparently it was not good form to do anything but turn down an empty glass each time. After supper the women again gathered in groups and the men became equally clamorous.

Sunday afternoons and holidays I caught a glimpse of women riding in carriages or automobiles through Chapultepec Park. On a bull-fight day Mexican women are "in their glory" and have more freedom than at any other time during the year. They turn out in splendid gowns in open carriages, brilliant hued mantillas around their shoulders, silk scarves draped over their hair, black face about their heads, red roses in their black hair, fans waving in tantalizing manner. It is their day of days.

As for the girls, the flappers of Mexico, for them there was no high light, no red-letter days. Presidential banquets, bull fights and other festivities mean nothing to them. They are guarded more closely than their older sisters. They enjoy few liberties. Even the girl with an admirer with serious intentions is under much restraint. She is guarded more closely than the girl less fortunate. Mexican mothers do not trust young bachelors. Strange contrast—American women have less confidence in the married ones.

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Beware of the Traffic Court Route Unless You Can Offer a Real Alibi

One of the District's Wise Men Presides Over Busy Tribunal—Monday Morning's the Big Session of the Week—Speeders Who Are Hurrying to Feed the Baby, Trying Out a New Car, Rushing to Buy Cigarettes, Preparing to Pay Notes Which are Due, or Worried by Soft Tires—Whisky Bearer Makes Trusting Confession—Scorn of the Vampish Ladies.



THERE ARE MANY ODD TYPES TO BE SEEN IN THE TRAFFIC COURT.

BY JAMES A. BUCHANAN.

ONE of the busiest places in Washington at 11 a. m. on every weekday is the Traffic Court presided over by Judge John P. McMahon. If you are at all interested in the study of mankind and want to get a line on just how many people react under certain circumstances, wander down to the building at 6th and B streets northwest and push your way through dark corridors filled with perspiring humanity and brow-mopping policemen until you have managed to reach the third floor back.

The courtroom, presided over by Judge McMahon, is partly filled with benches, chairs for jurymen and a large table. The room reminds one of the office of a country justice of the peace. It is inadequate, dimly lighted and stuffy, and it is a wonder how his honor maintains his keenness of mind in the atmosphere that is damaged, putting it mildly, by the presence of so many humans, some of whom apparently have only a passing acquaintance with a halibut.

The task that confronts Judge McMahon each day is one that would have tried that wise man of biblical days, Solomon, and yet a vast majority of speeders and police officers declare that the presiding officer is just and fair. Of course, there may be a kick now and then from some traffic violator who has been fined from an officer whose "pinch" has beaten the case, but in the main, all are satisfied, and whatever rancor the convicted speeder may feel, by the time he has reached the sidewalk he has regained a tranquil frame of mind.

WHILE the number of arrests for traffic violations amounts to about eighty each day, the majority of those that have been conveyed to the station houses forfeit their collateral without appearing in court and they are permitted to do so if the case is not an unusually flagrant one.

Monday morning is naturally the banner day of the week. Then the bases on the calendar will number a hundred or more. This is occasioned, of course, by the fact that many more people go out for a spin on Saturday afternoon or Sunday than on any other period during the week.

Those who have been arrested for violating traffic regulations may elect as to whether they will be tried by a judge or a jury. A large majority of the alleged offenders prefer to rest their cases with Judge McMahon. In fact, it is exceptional for anyone to ask for a jury trial. Those who ask for jury trials as a rule are persons charged with driving an automobile while intoxicated.

You have not been a spectator in the Traffic Court for more than half an hour when you realize that the individual who dubbed the "Alibi Club" was a keen student of human nature and one who particularly appreciated the fitness of things.

ONE of the traffic officers said: "The majority of people that we arrest can fully qualify as members of the Ananias Club. The majority of them insist that they were not going over twelve miles an hour. Some spring the one that they had left the baby at home and had to hurry back because it was necessary for the youngest to have its meal just at that particular time. Some also make the excuse that their brakes did not work well. Just what relation brakes not working well has to do with going over twenty miles an hour is something I could never quite figure out."

"Another fellow that I caught gave as his excuse for violating the law that he thought his front tire was getting soft and he was beating it for a service station to get it pumped up. One that I grabbed down by the bridge that crosses over from Virginia stated that he had a load of whisky on board and he was trying to hurry up and get it into Washington before the police grabbed him. He did not seem to realize for the moment that I was a policeman."

THOSE arraigned are of various types. You will see the professional chauffeur, apparently bored and blasé. He is familiar with every phase of court proceedings, and is probably making a mental bet as to how much the judge will "soak" him. If his offense is not a serious one and his face is not too familiar to the court, he generally figures a five or ten spot as the amount that he is going to deposit in the District's strong box. If the offense for which he is charged is more serious, or if he has been up but a short time before, his name probably will be called three by Bailiff Hughes, but to no avail. He has probably jumped to another town or taken another kind of a job for a month or so.

If the offender is what is known as "a sport," he has his hand on his pocketbook ready to pay the fine, and generally smilingly confesses that no doubt the officer is right, and he is extremely sorry that he has violated the law, taking this attitude so as not to ruffle the temper of the judge or jury. He prefers to take the line of least resistance when his pocketbook is filled with sufficient money to pay his fine.

Often the negligent citizen on his first arrest, who has been brought to court on a charge of violating on traffic rules, bristles all up, and whippers excitedly in his counselor's ear. This kind of offender usually hires a lawyer and conducts himself in such a manner as to emphasize the fact that this is his first appearance in court and that he is just morally certain that he has been picked out by some policeman who, he just knows, has a grudge against him, but for just exactly what reason he cannot say.

Then comes the dimpled darling who approaches the legal bar with a confident smile, and when the policeman states that the clock on his motor cycle shows that the fair one in her snappy roadster was hitting a clip between forty and fifty, looks at the copper with a hurt expression, and when she takes the stand to refute the officer's statement, she meekly drops her eyes so that her curling lashes, sweeping her cheeks, may add to the picture of injured innocence. If she succeeds in fooling the judge, a very unlikely happening, she leaves the court demurely, but, as a rule, stops at the door and gives a plying smile to the officer, as if to say, "You poor fish, you pinched me but you can never make it stick as long as I

have my good looks!"

The acquittal of this kind of offender does not come from Judge McMahon. The vampish ladies can only beat the game when twelve men, all of whom have been sworn to do their duty, occupy seats in the jury box.

JUDGE McMAHON is a quiet sort of person, one of those that give the impression of great reserve strength. His eyes are keen, his jaw is firm, but his greatest asset is a quick, analytical brain, and the speeder that goes up before the judge, and thinks that he can "put it over" should revise his mental attitude. The judge has a habit of asking one or two seemingly harmless questions and then letting the person in the witness stand tell his own story. After the narrative is finished, the judge picks up the thread of thought and asks a couple more questions, which generally result in the entire truth being told.

He is the kind of man that you would hate to have as district attorney when you were charged with a serious crime. He is fair and gives the accused every chance that is within the law, but he has an almost uncanny faculty of getting at the meat of the situation before the person in the witness box realizes just what he is doing.

There are many odd types to be seen in this court. One who was noticed the other day had the face of a cherub. He simply exuded goodness, but when the case was finished you realized that he was anything but an angel. Another young chap who had been arrested for trying to emulate some of the world's greatest speed artists appeared in court with hair so slick that he reminded you of a varnish advertisement. He was glib of tongue, but when the scales of justice measured the testimony, both for and against him, the young man paid a substantial fine.

It is said that women, as a rule, are far more honest on the witness stand than men. There was a qualifying clause, however, by the officer who made the remark that he was not certain as to whether women were more truthful because of a desire to be honest or that they were frightened by being put under oath.

THE amount of bail demanded at the police stations ranges from \$2 to \$300 cash, or a \$500 bond. The larger figures represent the amount that it is necessary to deposit when charged with being intoxicated while driving. Many of the "bounced" drivers pay fines of \$100 or get sixty days in jail, and if the offense is repeated they are likely to serve a term in jail.

With the great number of motor cars on the streets of Washington today, it is far more necessary than it was a few years ago that traffic regulations be strictly enforced, and numerous police officers are of the opinion that it would be an excellent idea to have the traffic police force all housed in one building and detailed from that point to different sections of the city.

The next time you get in your car pause before you put your foot on the starter and remember that you may draw a fine of \$10, or it may be more. You may get away with speeding or violating some other regulation a dozen times, but if you break the law they are going to get you sooner or later.

That's All, and Enough. Harold—Would you run away and get married with me, Maggie? Maggie—Impossible! Harold—Why? Maggie—Oh, just circumstances. Harold—What are they dear? Maggie—You're Harold, dear.

Officer Vaughan, in relating some of his experiences, said: "Ninety per cent of the people don't really think how fast they are going, and when you overhaul them after they have been hitting it up

being chasing speeders so long that he knows every trick and device that those law violators practice, from the plea of sickness in the family to that of the man whose speedometer fails to register. One interesting case that Vaughan had was that of a young man who was hitting it up for about forty miles an hour and when overhauled, gave the unique excuse that he was on his way to get a package of cigarettes. The next day Judge McMahon imposed a fine of \$50, which plus the cost of the smoke, made an important item.

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